

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 006466

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/21/2014

TAGS: PGOV IS GOI INTERNAL

SUBJECT: SHARON AND PERES AIM FOR UNITY GOVERNMENT WITHIN  
THE WEEK DESPITE LEGAL HICCOUGH OVER PERES' ROLE

Classified By: Political Counselor Norman Olsen for reasons 1.4 (b,d).

11. (C) Summary: Prime Minister Sharon is well on his way to gaining passage of an amendment to the country's Basic Laws that will meet Labor's demands for senior government positions and allow Sharon to form a new government by New Year's. The amendment would allow for a second alternate prime minister position -- to be held by Shimon Peres -- a position demanded by Labor in lieu of receiving the Defense, Foreign Affairs, or Finance portfolios. Sharon is exerting strong pressure on his party to expedite Knesset approval of the bill, and Labor Party leader Peres is pushing his own party to approve the coalition agreement and elect its seven ministerial candidates. The outcome of internal party squabbles over process and expediency will determine whether a unity government will be formed this week or next. End Summary.

-----  
"Peres Bill" Key to Unity Government  
-----

12. (C) Labor and Likud are expected to ram through the Knesset within days the necessary amendment to the Basic Laws to create a second alternate prime minister position to be held by Shimon Peres, as detailed in the proposed Likud-Labor agreement. Likud MK Ehud Olmert already occupies the single alternate PM slot allowed under Israel's Basic Laws, which are similar in effect to a constitution.

13. (C) Likud Party officials have been greasing the legislative process to allow for expedited passage of the amendment -- now referred to as the "Peres Bill." Although Knesset Constitution and Law Committee Chairman Michael Eitan, whose committee must consider the amendment, is opposed to rushing the action, the 21-member Knesset House Committee approved abbreviated consideration December 20, allowing the Knesset plenary to refer the bill to Eitan's committee for consideration December 21. Ministry of Justice Knesset Liaison Paz Barnett told poloff December 21 that Eitan is under pressure to complete work on the bill in only one or two sittings and refer the bill back to the Knesset for votes as early as December 22. Eitan has indicated, however, that his committee's deliberations could last through the week. The bill requires three Knesset readings and votes after it leaves the committee, but all three could be completed back-to-back on the same or consecutive days.

-----  
Getting Labor's Ducks in Line  
-----

14. (C) Despite internal Labor squabbles over timing, Labor's Central Committee is now scheduled to meet December 21 to endorse the Likud-Labor agreement -- including a contingency clause requiring passage of the Basic Laws amendment -- and determine how and when it will select its ministerial and deputy minister candidates. Party elections will likely take place within a week.

\*\*\*\*\*  
Visit Embassy Tel Aviv's Classified Website:  
<http://www.state.sgov/p/nea/telaviv>

You can also access this site through the State Department's  
Classified SIPRNET website.

\*\*\*\*\*  
KURTZER